

The Coronation and Banquet of King Henry IV

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The Deposition of King Richard II

Henry IV, also known as Henry of Bolingbroke and Henry of Lancaster, was crowned King of England on October 13¹. 1399. His coronation followed the tumultuous reign of his cousin, King Richard II (1377-99), whom Henry had deposed and imprisoned in a bloodless coup. He was still wary of the possibility of his own overthrow². Therefore, Henry needed to satisfy all possible arguments and emphasize his rightful ascension as king to all previous kings.³ To accomplish such a task while maintaining order in the fragile kingdom of England, Henry needed to have a well-choreographed coronation, and have hosted a carefully curated selection of foods for his banquet. This meant that Henry's coronation and banquet were slightly unusual.

The prologue to Henry's succession begins roughly eighty years prior to Henry, with Edward II. Edward reigned during the Great Famine, between 1315 and 1322, which saw so many people die that there wasn't enough people to bury the dead⁴. In an attempt to ease the growing tension between the classes and diminish the unnecessary consumption of foods, Edward issued a proclamation intended to curtail the feasts that nobility had been enjoying. His proclamation details the new rule the nobility were to adhere to, and why they were to do so:

...(Due to) outrageous and excessive multitude of
meats and dishes, which the great men of the kingdom used

¹ Chris Given-Wilson, *Henry IV*. New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2016. P 147

² Ibid P. 157

³ Ibid P. 154

⁴ John Aberth, *From the Brink of the Apocalypse*, New York: Routledge, 2001. P 14

in their castles, and by persons of inferior rank imitating their example, beyond what their stations required, and their circumstances could afford, many great evils had come upon the kingdom, the health of the King's subjects had been injured, their property consumed, and they had been reduced to poverty...(thus) the great men of the kingdom should have only two courses of flesh meats served up to the tables, each course consisting only of two kinds of flesh meat...⁵

However, King Richard II thought himself above such proclamations, as he believed himself king and therefore answerable only to himself and God. His subsequent usurpation was the outcome of that belief. Specifically, Richard II was known for his expensive tastes and extravagant banquets. In *Antiquitates Culinariae*, Reverend Richard Warner reported that "Two thousand cooks and three hundred servitors were employed in his kitchen...twenty eight oxen, three hundred sheep, and an incredible number of fowls and all kinds of game were slaughtered every morning"⁶ this endless frivolous consumption, coupled with rising taxes that were needed to pay for the 100 years' war between England and France, as well as Richards general disinterest with the lower classes eventually caused Richard's downfall and led to the Henry IV's usurpation of the throne.

Therefore, when Henry took the throne, even though he had the support of the peasants, some of the nobility and the clergy, he needed to carefully navigate the political

⁵ John Nichols, *Ordinances and Regulations for the Government of the Royal Household*. London: Society of Antiquaries, 1790. P. Viii

⁶ Reverend Richard Warner, *Antiquitates Culinariae*. London: Prospect Books, 1970. P. 93

miasma Richard II left behind, while ensuring that the fragile peace with the French was maintained. His goal at his coronation was to ensure the lower classes, nobility, and clergy knew he had been chosen by God to rule England, and would protect England by being a good king. In this way, he would receive the backing of the people, and secure the throne from those who would attempt to depose him.

Henry IV ascends to the English Throne

To accomplish a successful coronation, Henry chose to have his coronation on Sunday, October thirteenth. Coronations were usually held on Sundays because of their quasi-sacramental character. The two reasons for being crowned on October 13, according to Chris Given-Wilson were, firstly because it was the feast of Saint Edward the Confessor,⁷ who was the patron saint of England's medieval Monarchs. By using this holy day, Henry was "(appropriating) the saint who had become the talisman of English monarchy."⁸ His choice of coronation day was also a political move against the French as it sent a message proving that the English crown was a reinstated power. Using the saints' day is also a way of adding further religious power for Henry, as he in essence, takes on those saint-like qualities and uses them to set the tone for his reign. The day also marked the anniversary of his exile from England by Richard II one year previously.⁹ Which Given-Wilson says may have been a lucky day for Henry.

The day before the coronation was a grand affair, Henry rode through London astride a white horse, dressed in gold and blue, and wearing the badge of the king of France. With him were "2,000 lords, ladies, knights, clerks and household servants, all

⁷ Given-Wilson, *Henry IV* P. 147

⁸ Ibid P. 147

⁹ Ibid P. 147

wearing newly made robes, and perhaps three times as many horses.”¹⁰ The white horse was a symbol of purity, while the badge of the King of France was meant to be a reminder of the Plantagenet claim by the Lancasters to the French Throne. The procession that rode through London would have bolstered the confidence of the onlookers and showed the power that was returning to England.

The following day, Henry made his confession and heard three masses. Following those, he was purified with incense and holy water, and led to the Westminster abbey. Surrounding him were monks and the Bishop of London, carrying the holy sacrament and singing mass.¹¹ Prior to the actual crowning, Adam of Usk; a chronicler of the time, tells us that Henry, “created forty-two knights, including his four sons, the earls of Arundel and Stafford, and the son and heir of the earl of Warwick, together with whom, as well as the other leading men of the realm, he made his way in great state to Westminster.”¹² This installation of forty knights shows that Henry was cementing alliances.

He also needed to ensure that his own reign would appear ordained by God, and all of these actions; attending mass, being purified, confessing, and receiving the holy sacrament, were meant to demonstrate Henry’s spiritual fitness to rule. The entire process was very important for beginning Henry’s reign, as it would ensure that any questions about his claim to the throne by any of the classes could be denied due to his being accepted by God to lead the people.

The events of the coronation (preserved in the *Annales Ricardi Secundi*, [297-331]) were unusual because, as the character Thomas Walsingham reported, special oil was used that had been left by St. Thomas Becket, accompanied by a prophecy made to

¹⁰ Ibid P. 147

¹¹ Given-Wilson, *Henry IV* P. 147

¹² Chris Given-Wilson Ed., *The Chronicle of Adam Usk* New York: Oxford University Press, 1997, P. 71

Thomas by the Blessed Virgin. It indicated that a future English king who was anointed with the oil would “recover Normandy and Aquitaine, and would drive the infidels from the Holy Land.”¹³ According to Walsingham, himself a monk the use of the oil persuaded many of the English that God had chosen Henry, and was therefore a rightful king.¹⁴ These ceremonies therefore confirmed that,

... (Henry is) descent through blood, the designation of his predecessor following his voluntary abdication, popular acclamation, divine favor as demonstrated by his virtually bloodless triumph, the explicit intervention of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the implicit sanction of England’s two most famous saints...For the future, Henry had stressed that, although he would uphold knightly values, he was not going to let the fact of his conquest lead him to abuse his powers... (He) would temper his justice with mercy...¹⁵

Because Henry had claimed the throne through conquest, many of the supporters of Richard were afraid that Henry would execute them. He had already executed three of Richards most vocal supporters: Le Scrope, Bussy and Green.¹⁶ They were pacified then, when Henry assured Richard’s previous supporters that only those who had “acted contrary to the good purpose and the common profit of the realm”¹⁷ would be in danger.

¹³ Chris Given-Wilson, *Chronicles of the Revolution*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993. Pp. 200-202

¹⁴ Ibid P. 202

¹⁵ Given-Wilson, *Henry IV* P. 154

¹⁶ Ibid P. 147

¹⁷ Ibid P. 147

Henry is very clever in this way; if he had immediately ordered them executed he would have tipped the fragile balance of English nobility, and plunged the country into further chaos. But, by stating that they were safe, Henry thus persuaded them to become loyal to him instead of Richard, and helped to stabilize the country.

However, Henry had to prove his power and control almost immediately after the coronation. Adam of Usk tells us that the king's champion Sir Thomas Dymoke rode into the banquet hall in full armor regalia and announced to all in attendance

“... (That) if there was any person who wished to say that his liege lord the king of England...had not lawfully been crowned king of England, he was ready to prove with his body...that he (King Henry IV) had been.”¹⁸ To which Henry replied, that he was more than prepared to relieve Sir Thomas of that duty, and respond himself.¹⁹ It was a tradition for the king's champion to challenge any opponents at the banquet, but it was also important for Henry show his power by telling Sir Thomas to stand down.

Attendance and Seating at the Banquet

Medieval England was known for its class division and stratification;²⁰ therefore, the guest list to the coronation and banquet would have been very exclusive. It was designed by custom, but among those whom Henry invited were Thomas Beauchamp the Earl of Warwick, Lord Chamberlain, Marshal the Earl of Westmoreland, Sir Thomas Erpingham, and multiple others.²¹ Henry would have also invited members of the church, barons, dukes, aldermen and the mayor. By inviting these people, Henry is honoring and

¹⁸ Chris Given-Wilson Ed., *The Chronicle of Adam Usk* P. 73

¹⁹ Ibid P. 73

²⁰ David Gary Shaw, *Necessary Conjunctions: The Social Self in Medieval England*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. 36.

²¹ Laurence, Janet. Ed. Walker, Harlan. “Royal Feasts” *Oxford Symposium on Food & Cookery, 1990: Feasting and Fasting: Proceedings*. London: Prospect Books, 1990. Pp. 138-148

thanking them for their support of his claim to the throne. He also affirmed their status, such as the mayor and aldermen, who may have worried they would soon be replaced.

Many of the most important guests would have had roles to play at the banquet,

...The Earl of Arundel acted as butler, the earl of Oxford as ewerer, Lord Grey of Ruthin as naperer, Thomas Erpingham as chamberlain, John Lord Latimer as almoner, William Venour as waferer and Edmund de la Chaumbre as lardiner; William d'Argentan carried the king's golden goblet and the mayor of London poured his wine. The duke of Aumale, Surrey and Exeter and the earls of Somerset and Warwick helped to carve and serve the king's food²²

There were also practical reasons for these assigned roles; they ensured that Henry's banquet ran smoothly, as the assignments were predetermined,²³ and that he survived the night, it would have tarnished the honor of the noble man had Henry not survived the banquet. To have a servant or someone similarly unknown, act as butler or cupbearer could very well have ended in death for Henry, as Richard's supporters were still an active threat.

The seating arrangement of such an array of nobility was a political chessboard. It was, and still is, incredibly important to not insult a guest by placing them at a spot lower than their perceived standing, or indeed higher, as Margaret Visser tells us. The simple placement of guests is an incredibly political act.²⁴ Henry organized the banquet hall so that he and the prelates, important members of the church, were on a dais above the rest

²² Given-Wilson, *Henry IV* Pp. 152-153

²³ Ibid P. 152

²⁴ Margaret Visser, *The Rituals of Dinner*, New York: Open Road Integrated Media, 2015. P. 121

of the dinner guests. This seating arrangement placed Henry and the prelates as the focal point for the banquet. Additionally, Henry's eldest son stood behind him, armed with the Lancaster sword, while "...the earl of Westmoreland and Lord Furnivall held the scepter and staff."²⁵ With Henry seated between the prelates and backed by his own sword, scepter and staff, Henry would have appeared an intimidating figure, both politically and religiously.

The prelates would have had a place of honor next to Henry because of the religiosity of the affair. Because Henry was now in charge of the country, both politically and religiously, he was to ensure that the country would remain in God's grace, and it had been the church officials who had elevated him to that position. To have them sit at a lower table would have been an insult not only to the officials, but also to the church. For everyone else attending the banquet, seating was arranged by importance or status, with "...Barons of the Cinque Ports and the mayor and aldermen of London occupying tables just below the king's, and further tables reserved for the dukes and earls of the realm and for the newly created knights."²⁶

Silverware at the banquet would have been a knife, the smaller sword and the ancient symbol of masculinity.²⁷ Which carried over to the knife- that people would carry on their person. Violence, with knives being as readily available as they were, would have been a possibility for the new King, so by putting the new knights at the further tables, Henry would have spaced those loyal to him well around the room, and prevented himself from being attacked. Those in attendance of the banquet used special knives, only for the purpose of eating, as Visser tells us. However, only the nobility would have been

²⁵ Given-Wilson, *Henry IV* P. 152

²⁶ Ibid Pp. 152-153

²⁷ Margaret Visser, *The Rituals of Dinner* P. 183

able to afford such a luxury.²⁸ Forks, spoons, bowls, bread, and fingers were the mediums that brought the food to the mouth.²⁹ This is also where the phrase “upper crust society” comes from: the upper crust of the bread was for nobility, while the lower crust and left overs went to the lower classes. With so much meat at the table, the ewers (hand washers) would have battled greasy fingers throughout the night.

It should be noted that no women are mentioned at all throughout the banquet. Henry had previously been married to Mary de Bohun,³⁰ who had died in 1394, five years prior to the deposition, but with whom he had produced six children, (four sons and two daughters). The presence of Henry’s eldest son is confirmed, but there is never any mention his daughters Blanche or Philippa,³¹ who would have been quite young. It is possible women were in attendance, as they were a part of the coronation “...2,000 lords, ladies...”³² and if they had been in attendance at the banquet, then would have likely sat next to their husbands, but no source cites their presence or seating arrangements.

The banquet was designed to impress the guests, with its display of wealth: three soteltes, one for each course, the head of a boar, peacocks, venison, pork, and birds. It also installed the idea of Lancastrian permanency, that Henry IV was now king of England, and with him came the Lancasters. The banquet also honored the noblemen who had helped Henry take the throne as was previously said, each person was given a specific job.

²⁸ Ibid P. 183

²⁹ Ibid P. 183

³⁰ Ibid Pp. 26, 86

³¹ Given-Wilson, *Henry IV* P. 87

³² Ibid P. 149

The All Important Menu

The menu of King Henry's coronation banquet is from a roll preserved in the British Manuscripts Library, which has been digitized and translated from French into English. Henry's banquet, held in the Great Hall at Westminster, consisted of a three-course meal, each with its own delicacies.³³ However, Reay Tannahill informs us in *Food in History*, that during the fourteenth and fifteenth century a course "...was a more or less haphazard assortment, its only real consistency that it offered a wide choice within itself..."³⁴ Therefore, none of the courses Henry had provided were meant to guide a guest through a detailed culinary journey, containing a beginning with an appetizer and ending with dessert, but were meant more to entertain a guest with a vast array of options for them to pick and choose, or disregard entirely.

The foods presented at the banquet were dressed up everyday foods. Typically, roasted meats and soups would have been on a noble man's table. But, as Edward II had declared, no more than two kinds of "flesh meats"³⁵ were acceptable at any course, and furthermore, only two flesh meat courses were allowed. Henry's banquet flies in the face of that proclamation, with serving venison, pork, and a variety of birds at each meal. The dishes were elegantly spiced and flavored for the banquet. The head of a wild boar would be the only thing that was inherently special. The boar would have been hunted by the king prior to the banquet, and then dressed up with garlands and spiced with ginger.³⁶

The foods presented on the menu are very class specific. A peasant would likely not eat any of these foods more than once or twice a year, barring chicken. Even then, the chicken

³³ Ibid P. 152

³⁴ Reay Tannahill, *Food in History*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 1988. P. 185

³⁵ John Nichols, *Ordinances and Regulations for the Government of the Royal Household*, P. Viii

³⁶ Janet Laurence, "Royal Feasts" P. 144

would not be a young plump creature; it would have been old and have stopped producing eggs.

Each course was presented with a “sotelte”. A sotelte, now known as a subtlety, is a sugar sculpture that was carved into decorative objects to reflect the occasion.³⁷ They were used to recognize social and economic significance,³⁸ as only the very wealthy could afford sugar simply meant for viewing and not eating. They were carved to represent religious symbols, such as angels, saints, and other holy images. Given that the coronation and banquet were both religious affairs, the absence of the subtleties would have been immediately apparent. Aside from the wide selection of foods available at Henry's banquet, these subtleties were perhaps the most glamorous item available.

The serving of so much meat not only displayed the wealth of the King, it was also a representation of masculinity and power.³⁹ If Henry were to have served only vegetables or soups, his reign would have been off to a shaky, feminine start. Margaret Visser, in *Much Depends on Dinner*, argues that meat can be scaled from least to most masculine: fish is considered the lowest and least masculine meat, while wild game tops the scale as the manliest because of its red color and difficulty in killing.⁴⁰ All three courses have several options of red meat. This is, on Henry's part, a way to emphasize his power over England, while proving his masculinity. The coronation banquet also served a few dishes of fish and vegetarian options, which would have been for the pious diner who ate no meat.

³⁷ June Di Schino “The Significance and Symbolism of Sugar Sculpture at Italian Court Banquets” P. 115

³⁸ Ibid P. 115

³⁹ Margaret Visser, *Much Depends on Dinner*, New York: Grove Press. 1986. P 151

⁴⁰ Ibid P. 151

No food at a medieval banquet could be properly eaten without the presence of the carver. During Henry's banquet, it was the Earl of Somerset.⁴¹ June Di Schino writes that the carver was:

...An extraordinarily theatrical figure who performed an acrobatic act with a formidable range of knives. He would dexterously slice, cut and chop all manner of foods in the air – a suckling pig, an artichoke, and a pike, even an egg. If he carved on a plate, he would be instantly recognized as second-rate...⁴²

Margaret Visser concurs, adding that the meat would then fall gracefully onto a plate in an attractive pattern, salt was then added before the dish was presented to the dinner guests.⁴³ Having no carver present at the banquet would have been a social faux pas on Henry's part.

The first course was full of show-stopping meats and game, designed to impress the guests with their variety of stuffed, roasted, and boiled meat. Henry had the banquet tables adorned with pork, cygnets (young swans), capons (castrated roosters), pheasants, heron, and sturgeon.⁴⁴ Each dish would have been cooked in its own selection of spices, such as ground pepper, saffron, ginger, salt, cinnamon and cloves.⁴⁵ The roasted boars

⁴¹ Ibid P. 139

⁴² June Di Schino, "The Significance and Symbolism of Sugar Sculpture at Italian Court Banquets" *Food and Material Culture Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery*. Great Britain: Prospect Books, 2014, P. 111

⁴³ Margaret Visser, *The Rituals of Dinner* P. 234

⁴⁴ Thomas Austin, Ed. *Two Fifteenth Century Cookery Books*. London: Oxford University Press, 1964. P. 57

⁴⁵ Ibid P. 41

head would have been a centerpiece, probably dotted with lardons of pork fat sticking out all over, so as to resemble chain mail.”⁴⁶

The only dish served at the first course not packed with meat, was the “Crustade Lumbarde”⁴⁷ Which still contained protein: marrow and eggs. The Crustade Lumbarde was tart filled with dates, prunes, parsley, cream, bone marrow and eggs.⁴⁸ Seasoned with salt and sugar, it was most likely a palate cleanser between the protein laden dishes being passed around.

The following course was more varied in its presentation of meat, though still protein centric. It contained venison, meatballs, peacocks (presented with the feathers on so to display its grandeur), cranes, rabbit, fried strips of meat, bittern (a variety of heron), and pullet (a young hen). Accompanying this course was a “Gely,”⁴⁹ essentially meat that was boiled, and then presented in its jellied juices, and a “Graunt Tarte.”⁵⁰ The Graunt Tarte was a tart, typically made of meat or fish, and as stated by Constance Hieatt and Sharon Butler in *Curye on Inglysch*, it would have been stuffed with dried fruit, or fresh fruits that were in season.⁵¹ Finally, the second course also contained a “Leche Lumbarde”⁵² It was a sweetmeat made from “...dates stewed in wine, pounded, then mixed with wine and sugar to a stiff paste...then placed on a board. Slices of a stiff paste made from bread crumbs, ginger and cinnamon were added and a syrup of aromatic wine

⁴⁶ Janet Laurence, “Royal Feasts” P. 144

⁴⁷ Thomas Austin, *Two Fifteenth Century Cookery Books*. P. 57

⁴⁸ Ibid P. 57

⁴⁹ Constance B. Hieatt and Butler, Sharon *Curye on Inglysch*. P. 191

⁵⁰ Thomas Austin, *Two Fifteenth Century Cookery Books*. P. 58

⁵¹ Constance B. Hieatt and Butler, Sharon *Curye on Inglysch*. P. 137

⁵² Thomas Austin, *Two Fifteenth Century Cookery Books*. P. 58

or spiced honey poured over.”⁵³ Similar to the tart in the first course, this tart would have also been useful as a palate cleanser.

The third course had the most dessert like options, but maintained the strong presence of meat with the most varied choice of fowl. Among the dishes was a white soup, preserved quinces (which taste similar to a pear and apple), herons, cranes, partridges, pigeons, quails, plover (a small bird), as well as minced meat, meatballs, and rabbits.⁵⁴ The dessert options were the preserved quinces, which were possibly a precursor to marmalade.⁵⁵ Fritters made with eggs, saffron, ale, salt and apples, and then fried and sprinkled with sugar.⁵⁶ Sweet custard tarts and “...a mixture of yolks of eggs, sugar, ground ginger, raisings and minced dates in fine pastry cases, either baked or fired in fresh fat.”⁵⁷ Doucettys were a type of sweet custard tarts sometimes filled with pork, almond milk, or cream and then peppered with sugar, honey, saffron, or spices.⁵⁸ The real difficulty here was avoiding a soggy bottom and leaking from the pastry-something even modern chefs have difficulty mastering.

Finally, each course ended with a “sotelte”. This was a grand edible centerpiece, often a sugar sculpture that was molded into decorative objects to reflect the occasion.⁵⁹ They were used to recognize social and economic significance,⁶⁰ as only the very wealthy could afford sugar simply meant for viewing and not eating. They were carved to represent religious symbols, such as angels, saints, and other holy images. Given that the

⁵³ Janet Laurence, “Royal Feasts” P. 146

⁵⁴ Thomas Austin, *Two Fifteenth Century Cookery Books*. P. 58

⁵⁵ Janet Laurence, “Royal Feasts” P. 146

⁵⁶ Thomas Austin, *Two Fifteenth Century Cookery Books*. P. 44

⁵⁷ Janet Laurence, “Royal Feasts” P. 146

⁵⁸ Ibid P. 146

⁵⁹ June Di Schino “The Significance and Symbolism of Sugar Sculpture at Italian Court Banquets” P. 115

⁶⁰ Ibid P. 115

coronation and banquet were both religious affairs, the absence of the subtleties would have been immediately apparent. Aside from the wide selection of foods available at Henry's banquet, these subtleties were perhaps the most glamorous item available.

On the menu are two items that have caused some debate; one is "egle." Janet Laurence argues that egle may have been eagle⁶¹. However, she adds, hunting birds such as an eagle would have no doubt been more useful alive than on the dinner table, she goes on to argue that it is possible that the sotelte may have been carved into the shape of an eagle. This seems to go against the religious iconography of the soteltes. Egle is also not at the end of the menu with the sotelte, which would imply that it was something meant to be eaten.

The second is "pottys of lyllye," which could mean pots of lily. It can be argued that the pots of lilies were a white soup or sauce, and perhaps a precursor to the béchamel. Béchamel is typically a very delicate tasting white sauce, and therefore pots of lilies would have been both a poetic name and it wouldn't be too far a stretch. Contrarily, pots of lilies may have been lily water, similar to rose water. Then it would have been something added to the sweet dishes to give it a gently perfumed taste, or as it is an item on the menu, guests may have drunk it. The last possible reason is that it was meant exactly as it sounds. Pots filled with lilies around the banquet hall, not meant for consumption, but sharing the same reason as the soteltes, something meant to beautify the occasion.

The beverage of choice, found at all three courses was wine. At Henry's banquet, it would have been "...sweetened with honey, thickened with rice flour, spiced and

⁶¹ Janet Laurence "Royal Feasts" P. 147

colored red with mulberries or Saunders.”⁶² Medieval nobility had access to other drinks; such as mead, beer, and spirits, however wine was chosen because it created a distinction between the upper classes and the lower classes, and it had an air of sophistication.⁶³ According to humoral theory, the guide to all ailments in the medieval ages, it was contested whether or not wine was a hot, cold, moist or dry medicine. Regardless, it was agreed upon that wine was “believed to keep the humours in balance, especially when it came to temperature and humidity.”⁶⁴ Wine was seen to raise the spirits, ease digestion, assist appetite, and color the complexion.⁶⁵ It then becomes obvious that Henry would want to choose a beverage that was widely celebrated for its health benefits and prestige. Ale was also likely have been available, as “without bread and wine and ale, no one at a feast will be at ease.”⁶⁶ Wine, however have been the more desired drink.

Dinner Deconstructed

The serving of so much meat not only displayed the wealth of the Lancastrians, however, it was also a representation of masculinity and power.⁶⁷ If Henry were to have served only vegetables or soups, his reign would have been off to a shaky, feminine start. Margaret Visser, in *Much Depends on Dinner*, argues that meat can be scaled from least to most masculine: fish is considered the lowest and least masculine meat, while beef tops the scale as the manliest because of its red color.⁶⁸ Henrys coronation banquet serves very few dishes of fish, and those that have fish are typically hidden within tarts. In

⁶² Constance B. Hieatt and Butler, Sharon, *Curry on Inglysch*. London: Oxford University Press, 1985. P. 57

⁶³ C.M. Woolgar Ed., D. Serjeantson Ed., and T. Waldron Ed., *Food in Medieval England: Diet and Nutrition*. London: Oxford University Press, 2009. P 31

⁶⁴ John Varriano, *Wine: A Cultural History*. London: Reaktion Books Ltd. 2010. P. 129

⁶⁵ Ibid P. 130

⁶⁶ Janet Laurence, “Royal Feasts” P. 138

⁶⁷ Margaret Visser, *Much Depends on Dinner*, New York: Grove Press. 1986. P 151

⁶⁸ Ibid P. 151

contrast, all three courses have several options of red meat. This is, on Henry's part, a way to emphasize his power over England, while proving his masculinity.

The fruits that Henry chose to grace the tables with would have been delicacies; they also would have been another way of proving the influence Henry had. Quinces were particularly desired because of their flavor and the ornamental quality of their blossoms, and therefore they were presented preserved as their own dish. But common fruits such as dates, raisins, and apples would have been mixed into other foods to produce the fritters, tarts, and to sweeten meats. Fruit at Henry's banquet would have been rare, not only because of the inherent masculinity of meat, but also because of the date chosen for Henry's coronation. October is known for its apples, pears, grapes and nuts, hardy fruits designed to thrive in the Fall. Fruit would have also been used as a way of naturally sweetening the foods.

Much of the meats that were butchered in preparation for the banquet had to be salted or brined,⁶⁹ and the few vegetables and soups that are on the menu, were cooked with salt to add flavor. Some of the dishes on the menu are served without sauce intentionally, and then the guest added salt to their tasting.⁷⁰ But not only was salt useful prior to the banquet, but during it as well. Its proper usage was entrusted a pantler (servant in charge of the bread and pantry of the medieval household) who was also required to taste the salt before the meal.⁷¹ Salt would have been a commodity for the English, as salt mines and farms were hard to come by and expensive, not only to mine but also to transport. So the fact that so much salt was used points again towards the wealth of the Lancasters, and that England now had access to that wealth.

⁶⁹ Reay Tannahill, *Food in History*, P. 174

⁷⁰ Janet Laurence, "Royal Feasts" P. 146

⁷¹ Ibid P. 140

Finally, access to such carnivorous fare would require fuel for the duration of the cook time and basting oil (in this case lard). Lard would have been easy to come by, seeing as it is animal fat. Consistent temperature would have been difficult to maintain without a lot of fuel though. Poultry, generally considered to need the most attention in cooking, needs to be heated to at least 165 degrees Fahrenheit to be considered safe to eat, and a whole bird must be heated to 180 degrees. Master cooks of the fourteenth century may not have been able to identify the exact temperature of the bird, but knowing when it was cooked and safe to eat was essential. The number of slow cooked meats allows us to confirm that England was a well-forested area, and that acquiring fuel was not an issue for nobility in medieval England.

A Comparison

While no grocery list or quantity for Henry's coronation exists, the quantities and menus of food for other banquets are available. One contemporary banquet was that for the Duke of Lancaster and Richard II, hosted at the Bishop's place in London in 1387, twelve years prior to Henry's coronation:

...111 pigs, 50 swans, 210 geese, eight dozen rabbits, three bushels of apples (one bushel today is 40 pounds)⁷² 12 thousand eggs⁷³ (However) Archbishop Neville's installation feast (contained) 2000 each of geese, pigs and chickens, 100 dozen quails, 4000 each of wild ducks,

⁷² Russ Rowlett, "U.S. Commercial Bushel Sizes, 2001.

<https://www.unc.edu/~rowlett/units/scales/bushels.html> Accessed 11/04/2017.

⁷³ Janet Laurence, "Royal Feasts" P. 138

pigeons and rabbits, 4000 cold tarts, 1500 hot pasties of
venison, and much, much more.⁷⁴

Comparatively, Henry's coronation feast seems to be a paltry affair, only one head of a wild boar, and no mention of the quantity of pigs or birds. One possible reason for this is that England had not fully recovered from the famine, which officially ended in 1322.⁷⁵ Again, Richard further exacerbated tensions between himself and the public because of his unnecessarily grand feasts, "which saw ten thousand visitors daily to attend his court"⁷⁶ Whom he was then honor bound to feed, and it would not unseemly for them to receive peasant fare. For Henry to match the lavish feasts that Richard and the Duke of Lancasters had enjoyed, he would have put unnecessary strain on the English farmers, and Henry wanted to avoid that at all costs. Yet, Henry's feast was still a grand event. Similar feasts in the thirteenth century included the head of a boar, venison, cranes, kids (baby goats), swans, hens, pigs, and a variety of birds.⁷⁷ Arguably, a coronation was the most important public event that took place in medieval society, and while Henry's banquet was a step down from Richard II's expensive courtly lifestyle, it was a more than acceptable coronation banquet.

The coronation banquet of Henry V, who followed Henry IV, appears to be an incredibly different banquet, when in reality it was not. The biggest reason for this is that Henry V was crowned on April 9, 1413⁷⁸ on a "fish" day during lent, where the only available meat on Fridays was fish. Henry V deviated from the usual Sunday coronation because the realm needed a king and Henry IV had just passed away. Even though every

⁷⁴ Ibid P. 138

⁷⁵ John Aberth, *From the Brink of the Apocalypse*, P. 14

⁷⁶ Janet Laurence, "Royal Feasts" P. 138

⁷⁷ Ibid P. 138

⁷⁸ Chris Given-Wilson Ed., *The Chronicle of Adam Usk* P. 243

course was made up of trout, halibut, lamprey, salmon, sole, or some other combination of fish⁷⁹, Henry V was still considered a strong king. With so much fish being the only meat, it should have presented him as weaker, but the situation must be taken into account. If Henry V had a banquet filled with red meat, it would have been directly against the religious tradition, and painted him as a flawed king, incapable of protecting his people. Therefore, Henry IV and Henry V had similar banquets. Both showcased the power they had, Henry IV with his red meats and Henry V with his array of options of fish.

A divergent banquet from those looked at so far, would be Henry IV's wedding banquet to Joan of Navarre. Chris Given-Wilson states that the wedding took place in 1402,⁸⁰ but 1404,⁸¹ Janet Laurence argues, was the real year. Regardless of the date, this banquet is one in which women were assuredly present, and one in which the primary reason for the banquet was a celebration. The previous banquets had all been attempts at proving power and showing nobility or wealth. Henry's wedding banquet is different because of the existence of so many birds and fish on the menu. There is much less focus on large red meats and much more focus on the intricately cooked and designed foods, such as crème of almond, jellies, and minced pies.⁸² Soteltes are also found at each course as a show of finery. Women were typically in control of the kitchen in medieval society, and even when they were nobility they were then in charge of the staff of the kitchen and foods produced. This could be the reason that the wedding banquet differed so greatly from the coronation banquet. As previously stated, Henry wasn't married at the

⁷⁹ Janet Laurence, "Royal Feasts", 150

⁸⁰ Given-Wilson, *Henry IV* Pp. 234-235

⁸¹ Janet Laurence, "Royal Feasts" P. 148

⁸² *Ibid* P. 148

time of the coronation banquet, and it is likely he then would have had some part in planning it. Joan of Navarre would have been in charge of the wedding banquet and therefore, is likely the reason the banquets differ so greatly. It seems whenever women are in charge of a banquet attention is placed on every food, and when men are in charge of a banquet, attention is focused on the meat.⁸³

A Conclusion

Because of the political environment in which Henry IV ascended the English throne, his coronation and banquet were somewhat unusual. He adhered to tradition in being crowned on a Sunday, as well as receiving the sacrament, giving confession, and attending mass. However, he chose Edward the Confessor's day to be crowned for the added religious power, and the oil he was anointed with was part of a prophecy, and not the same oil that had crowned King Richard. It was intended to give him the spiritual right to claim back parts of France and to free the holy land, as well as declare himself the true king because of his proper bloodline. The banquet was unusual because Henry was widowed, and he therefore would have been in charge of planning it to a degree. Regardless, it worked as intended; it showed the Lancastrian power, wealth, and social standing. Henry had access to the money required to hire so many cooks and servants, as well as the fuel and ingredients. He showed his power and social standing by not only usurping the former king, but also doing it bloodlessly.⁸⁴ Both the banquet and the coronation were a deliberate form of religious and political propaganda. Designed to sway the country's opinion on who should be the king of England, and the final outcome was that Henry IV was declared the right and true king.

⁸³ Margaret Visser, *The Rituals of Dinner* P. 292

⁸⁴ C. Stephenson and F. G. Marcham, Trans, *Rotuli Parliamentorum*, Volume III, 1767, Pp. 250-5, and 415-34

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